

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 /056 W
-----200010Z 010406 /15

R 191500Z APR 77
FM AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7647
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PGOB, BR
SUBJ: REACTION OF FORMER SAO PAULO GOVERNOR ABREU SODRE TO
CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES AFFECTING 1978 ELECTIONS

REF: BRASILIA 3035

1. SODRE SAID THAT HE WAS UPSET BY THE TURN OF EVENTS IN BRAZIL. GEISEL HAD BROUGHT ABOUT A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE REVOLUTION, PERHAPS AS IMPORTANT AS THE MILITARY COUP IN 1968. SODRE DESCRIBED THE CHANGE AS RESULTING IN A NARROWING OF THE REVOLUTION'S BASE OF SUPPORT. HE EMPHASIZED GEISEL'S ISOLATION AMONG THE PEOPLE AND, INCREASINGLY, WITHIN THE ARMY. SODRE SAID THAT HE CONCLUDES FROM TALKING TO MILITARY CONTACTS THAT GEISEL WAS PRESSURED INTO RECESSING THE CONGRESS AND DECREETING THE POLITICAL CHANGES. "THE MILITARY WERE TIRED OF GEISEL'S CONSTANT TINKERING AND TOLD HIM THAT HE MUST MAKE DEFINITIVE INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES AND LIVE WITH THEM." SODRE SAID THAT WAS THE GOAL, BUT HE HAS LITTLE FAITH THAT THE RESULTS WILL BE LASTING BECAUSE THEY ARE TOO NARROWLY DESIGNED TO FIT THE CURRENT SITUATION.

2. SODRE SAID THAT THE INDIRECT ELECTIONS FOR GOVERNOR DO HAVE
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THE ADVANTAGE THIS TIME OF ALLOWING A RELATIVELY FREE CHOICE BY ARENA. HE EXPECTED THAT THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE, COMPOSED OF STATE DEPUTIES AND REPRESENTATIVES OF CITY COUNCILS WOULD RATIFY THE CANDIDATE SELECTED BY THE PARTY CONVENTION. WHILE IT WAS NOT AS GOOD AS A POPULAR ELECTION, SODRE STATED THAT AT LEAST THE GOVERNORS WOULD BE SOMEWHAT INDEPENDENT OF THE PRESIDENT. SODRE SAID THAT HE IS A CANDIDATE IN SAO PAULO AND IS

ALREADY WORKING ON GETTING HIS SUPPORTERS ELECTED AS DELEGATES
TO THE ARENA STATE CONVENTION.

3. SODRE SAID THAT HIS JUDGMENT IS THAT, BARRING A DRASTIC
WORSENING OF THE ECONOMIC SITUATION, GEISEL WOULD SERVE OUT HIS
TERM AND A MILITARY MAN WOULD REPLACE HIM. HE THEN QUESTIONED
HIS OWN PREDICTION, HOWEVER, BECAUSE HE COULD NOT FIND ANY
CIVILIAN SECTOR SUPPORTING THE PRESIDENT. SODRE PROCEEDED TO
ENUMERATE THOSE WHO WERE AGAINST THE REGIME -- BUSINESSMEN,
STUDENTS, INTELLECTUALS, THE PRESS, THE CHURCH, WORKERS,
MIDDLE CLASS AND PROFESSIONALS. "EVEN MILITARY MEN ARE LOOKING
FOR A WAY OUT." SODRE ASKED RHETORICALLY, "WHY DOESN'T THE REGIME
FALL? ONE DAY, PERHAPS SOON, SOME GENERAL WILL SAY 'THE KING
IS NAKED' AND IT WILL BE ALL OVER.

4. ON THE PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION, SODRE STATED THAT THE INCREASE
IN THE MANDATE OF THE PRESIDENT TO SIX YEARS WILL FAVOR
YOUNGER CANDIDATES. HE THINKS IT WILL HURT ARMY MINISTER
FROTA ("HE IS NOT QUALIFIED ANYWAY") BUT HELP SNI CHIEF FIGUEIREDO --
"A BAD CANDIDATE" -- AND RETIRED EULER BENTES -- "A GOOD
CANDIDATE."

COMMENT: SODRE'S OPINIONS DRAMATIZE THE DILEMMA OF AN INCREASING
NUMBER OF ARENA POLITICIANS WHO DO NOT SUPPORT THE REVOLUTION,
BUT HAVE NOWHERE ELSE TO TURN. SODRE MADE NO BONES ABOUT HIS
LACK OF RAPPORT WITH GEISEL AND HIS DISTRUST OF GOLBERY. HE
IS WIDELY REPUTED TO BE BARGAINING UP HIS POLITICAL VALUE IN SAO
PAULO IN THE HOPE OF BEING NAMED AMBASSADOR TO PARIS OR
LONDON.

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5. EMBASSY CONCURS.
CHAPIN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS, ELECTION FORECASTS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 19-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977SAOPA00980
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770136-0184
Format: TEL
From: SAO PAULO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770442/aaaabkgr.tel
Line Count: 100
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 16e0b4a2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BRASILIA 3035
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2762863
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REACTION OF FORMER SAO PAULO GOVERNOR ABREU SODRE TO CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES AFFECTING 1978 ELECTIONS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, BR, (SODRE, ABREU)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/16e0b4a2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009